

Why are reduced speed limits in effect when there's no work underway in a construction zone?

Construction director Rob Ahola says reduced speed limits in construction zones are not just for the benefit of workers' safety. "Construction speed zones are put in place when-ever conditions affecting the highway has been changed so that the regular speed limit is no longer appropriate for the road," he says. "For example, if the road alignment is altered for detours or if the lane and shoulder widths are reduced, a lower speed zone is put in place."

Speed zones are also often implemented when changes are made beside the highway by preliminary work such as tree removal, drilling of holes for utility pole relocation, excavation for geotechnical investigations and so on. "Anything that results in a reduced clear zone (the distance from the edge of a lane to an obstruction) requires a reduced speed limit to lessen the risk of collisions with the obstruction," says Ahola. "Traffic experts are regularly monitoring construction speed zones to ensure that they are only in effect when needed to protect workers or the travelling public."

If a construction speed zone sign is covered up, Ahola says it means the regularly posted speed is in effect. He cautions drivers to remember that there may be a need for a reduced speed zone just ahead, so keep an eye out and drive safely.

Photos:

Top: Traffic Pattern Changed sign warns drivers that the roadway has been changed to allow for construction. Often a road alignment change will be accompanied by a lower speed limit to ensure the safety of highway users.

Middle: Rock in this picture has reduced the clearance between the driving lane and an off-road object. Reduced clear zones can increase the risk of collisions. When clear zones or shoulders are reduced, the speed limit is adjusted for an increased margin of safety.

Bottom: When a speed sign is covered it means the regularly posted speed limit is in effect. In this case the traffic pattern, road alignment, clear zones and shoulders are to normal standards, so the reduced speed zone is only required for worker safety when construction is underway.

